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MODERN CHURCH REFORM:

A POEM.

Price Sixpence.

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MODERN CHURCH REFORM.

LONDON:
GILBERT & RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.

MODERN

CHURCH REFORM:

A POEM.

Cum tua pervideas oculis mala lippus inunctis,
Cur in *amicorum* vitiis tam cernis acutum,
Quam aut aquila, aut serpens Epidaurius? At tibi contra
Evenit, inquirant vitia ut tua rursus et illi.

HOR. SERM. Lib. I. Sat. 3.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR J. G. & F. RIVINGTON,
ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD,
AND WATERLOO PLACE, PALL MALL.

1834.

272.

MODERN CHURCH REFORM.

Oh, thou, 'mid civil anarchy and storm
Terrific nurs'd, Genius of Church Reform!
Whose curious sight ten thousand faults espies
Unseen or scarcely seen by other eyes;
Whose fancy bold the public weal secures
By offering for each fault ten thousand cures;
(Alas, to one with common eyes who sees,
So many cures seem worse than the disease:)
Thou, at whose bidding stern, in Heav'n's despite,
Myriads of nameless agents arm for fight;
Whose word can make e'en contraries combine,
Extremes approach, and opposites conjoin;
With zeal to purify the Church can fill
Folks who ne'er go to church,—nor ever will;
The sceptic cold with pious wish can warm,
Thou far-famed Power, I sing thee, Church Reform!

Though thy wild exploits not so meet may seem,
For Poet's verses as for madman's dream.

The prim Dissenter, cow'd beneath thy spell,
Leagues with the infidel and child of hell;
Yok'd as becomingly as ass and bull [1],
Papist and Puritan together pull;
Socinians, Baptists, Quakers, hand in hand,
With Deists, Atheists join at thy command;
And countless sects of every shade and dye,
For Church Reform lay every difference by.
When 'mid the storm thy voice is heard to chide,
Fierce controversy's troubled waves subside:—
Unnumber'd angry tongues thy voice can stop,
Unnumber'd hands for thee their quills let drop;
And, when they take them up again with joy,
On thy behalf forthwith those quills employ.
Thou makest rage, and war, and strife to cease,
And Babel discord yield to tranquil peace:
Peace between all, whoe'er they be, that cry
"Reform!"—to others, bitter enmity.
But such a peace,—as treacherous as the calm
That goes before the thunder's loud alarm;
Such peace as in the forest's moonlight glades

[1] See Deut. xxii. 10.

The banded robber's lawless breast pervades;
Such peace as might in hell itself prevail,
Ere its dark powers the Church of God assail!
How different peace like this from that of old
By Amoz' son in heavenly strains foretold,
When by the lion safe the lamb should stay,
And with the asp the laughing infant play!
"Different in what?" some Christian may reply,
Who thinks such peace fulfils this prophecy.

Different in this, that by the lion's side[1]
Or serpent's hole the babe can ne'er abide
In safety, till their present savage mood
Is chang'd, and they no longer thirst for blood.
But thou, a babe in wisdom not in years,
Art scar'd, forsooth, by no such prudent fears:
Wise as the serpent though the Papist be
And dangerous too, he is caressed by thee.
The Atheist, Deist, and Socinian; these
Are animals the cautious Churchman flees,
(Although these soul-devouring creatures know
Full well the weight of many a Churchman's blow:)
But thou, by no illiberal doubts deterr'd,
Fearless can'st join the unbelieving herd.

[1] See Bishop Van Mildert's Bampton Lectures. Lect. I. p. 7.

E'en grant the warfare just,—are such allies
As these the best to gain thee victories?
Shall he, who worships God and owns His laws,
With the blind Atheist e'er make common cause?
Shall he, who in the Gospel truth believes,
Join with the man who no such truth receives?
Or he, who hopes through Christ alone to gain
Forgiveness, join the cold Socinian train:
And join them, too, to level with the dust
A Church which puts in God and Christ her trust?
The end is worthy of such means!—Ah! why,
Ye Christians, who our peaceful fold will fly;
Why do ye with the wicked, hand in hand,
United thus against your brethren stand?
Why at the Church of England aim a blow,
And join with Infidels to lay it low;
Whilst in essentials even you must own
The Church of England is surpass'd by none.
Wilt thou, because its discipline to thee
And diff'rent rites seem not from error free,
With sceptic and Socinian foes unite,
Against our Zion's bulwarks proud to fight?
For shame!—it seems as if their heartless creed
Better than our's with your belief agreed.
Where is your Christian love, your Christian zeal?
Oh, haste the breach by folly made to heal.

Be sure, that peace which between right and wrong
O'erlooks the diff'rence never can last long;
Be sure, that peace for which men sacrifice
The truth, is bought at far too high a price.
Then fly, believer, unbelievers fly,
And join no more their godless company;
The best of men such fellowships accurst,
Ere long brings to a level with the worst.
Be dup'd no more, no more let foes employ
Your powers, your Christian brethren to destroy;
No; ne'er again let jealousy or spite
You with Christ's foes against Christ's flock unite.

"But then," it may be answered; "may not I,
"Dissenter though I be, still fairly try
"To mend what in your Church to me seems wrong,
"Though to that Church I wish not to belong?"
Good friend, your proffer'd interference kind
Recals another like event to mind;
When godless France across the Channel sent
To Albion's shore agents of discontent,
Apostles of sedition, to renew
Our polity according to *their* view:
The Throne and Church, poor fools, we lov'd they found
Too well to see them levell'd with the ground:

Too proud were we to Reason's bust to bend,
Or welcome Freedom at the bayonet's end.
So now we thank you for your efforts kind
Our polity to alter to *your* mind,
But, as we wish not to dictate to you,
So neither will we be dictated to. [1]
Yet, should we grant your right to interfere,
And our great need of Church reform, as clear ;—
Suppose us all prepar'd your will to do
And frame our Church not for ourselves, but you :—
Thousands of guides start up, each points his way ;
Which must we take? whose out-stretched arm obey?
We cannot follow all ; should we choose one,
Our choice will be approved by him alone.
Why will you not to us, when, where, and how,
Our Church shall be reform'd a voice allow?
What would be said of us, if we were e'er
With your " dissenting rights " to interfere?
Is liberty of conscience a mere name
To us? are *we* forbid *our* rights to claim?

[1] It is but necessary, if one would have another bear with him, he also should bear with another; and if he will not be prescribed to, neither let him prescribe to others. *Taylor—Lib. of Prophesying, Sect.* 11.

Enjoy your own opinions;—your own sect
The laws from meddlers and from foes protect:
But do not, with such freedom granted you,
Dissenters, grudge us the same freedom too.

"Well," you may say; "your Church corrupt, for me
" From interference should be wholly free,
" Were not I forc'd by Britain's bigot laws
" To feed a priesthood which my soul abhors,
" And to support a Church I ne'er go near,
" My part unwillingly compelled to bear."
There is the secret cause, that makes so warm
So many champions bold of Church Reform;
This is the hidden clue, that plainly proves
What motive oft their zeal and ardour moves.
Is Church Reform the end that each pursues?
No: some would pocket all the Church's dues,
Dues, that, like rent-charges to God, were given
That all might learn and know the way to Heaven.
Socinians, sceptics, may object to pay,
For certainly we do not teach *their* way:
But Christian non-conformists we defy
To prove we preach not Christianity.
As when of old the bravest chief might claim[1]
From Greece victorious the rewards of fame,

[1] See Herodotus. Lib. viii. cap. 123.

By venting on her all th
What Church, except yo
Sooner than our's would
What Church would not
Rather support than such

" But why support a C
" My purse be drain'd
feed?
" As for their bodies' wan
" So let them where they
Alas, our bodies soon thei
The soul may perish ere it
The body rests not till it i
The emptiest soul oft feels
When thirst and hunger c

Why, but to furnish knowledge to the poor,
And bring it home to every labourer's door.
And, while you thus for this world train our youth,
Will you shut up the well of Christian truth?
Open the school where earthly things are taught,
And the blest place, where without price are bought[1]
The milk and wine of Christian love, on those
Who have not wherewithal to buy them, close?
Are folks by nature of their wits bereft,
To choose their keepers and companions left?
May we leave simple children to select
Guardians and tutors whom they most affect?
Or to the will of soldiers and brave tars
Confide the choice of officers in wars?
When this is done, the State may then be freed
From furnishing God's word to them that need;
Then may the peasant for himself provide
His soul's support, his comforter and guide;
Then may Christ's simple flock be left to stray,
With none to show their path or cheer their way.[2]

[1] See Isaiah lv. 1.

[2] So Mr. Alison in his History of the French Revolution; "When children may be allowed to select the medicines they are to take in sickness, or the young the education which is to fit them for the world, the clergy may be left to the support of the public, but not till then."

But hark, I hear, methinks, a voice reply;
" I grant the State must pastors meet supply,
" But why so partially does it proceed?
" The public money should the public feed:
" The tithes and dues that we dissenters pay,
" Ne'er to our pastor's pockets find their way."
Fearful perhaps lest men in you behold
Some likeness to the Pharisees of old,
Tithes you protest against with double view,—
To save your character and money too.
But to the point, our dues you rightly call
Public, for they are for the good of all.
But though for public use, yet I deny
That you can prove them public property;
Does private property its tenure lose
By private men assign'd for public use?
If any one your chapel would endow,
Dissenters, you with thankful hearts would bow:
And, if the property by lease became
A churchman's, would you not your rent still claim?
If so, why will you yet, we fain would know,
Denounce endowments made so long ago;
Endowments, bound to which your land you hold,
Subject to which it has been bought and sold?
Is this your scheme?—" To property, if new
" *And lately* gain'd, we hold the title true;

" But when it has been yours time out of mind,
" The title fails,—your claim must be resign'd."
But, as the Romanist inquires with scorn,
" Where was your Church ere Luther yet was born ?"
So you dissenters want to know whence come
Our claims to tithes that once belong'd to Rome,
Or how we dare the chantry-lands retain,
Left to save souls from purgatory's pain.
The chantry-lands we now no longer own,
The blame of seizing *them* rests with the crown. [1]
As to our tithes, ere yet our country lay [2]
Prostrate before the Norman Conqueror's sway,
Ere yet a swarm of alien priests our shore
Had reached and taught us idols to adore ;
There was a Church in England, to whose aid
Tithes of the produce and the land were paid.
That Church her head as yet had never bow'd
Beneath the yoke of foreign Pontiffs proud,
From most of Rome's abuses she was free,
And on most points she did with us agree ;
Depriv'd of all her property at last,
For five long centuries her lot was cast
Beneath the iron sway of Papal Rome,
Until at length releas'd by Heaven's just doom.

[1] See *Le Bas' Life of Cranmer. Chap.* 10, *Vol.* 1, *P.* 307.

[2] See Soames's Bampton Lectures. See also The British Magazine, vol. iii. p. 121—127.

Then forth she stood in truth's bright garb array'd,
In vain around her popish thunders play'd,
And bigotry in vain, with chains and stake,
Her firm undaunted purpose strove to shake:
Her own she claim'd again, but all her dower
Ne'er could regain from the close grasp of power;
Yet what she has she holds, not as the spoil
Of Rome, but as her own right in the soil.
Nor would she have a feeble claim, although
None prior to King Henry she could show;
Her right to tithes and glebes would be, e'en then,
As good as that of many noblemen.
Russell and Cavendish and others own
Church lands and tithes;—they must be let alone:
Then may you try to spoil and render less
What clergymen and bishops still possess?
"Yes," the Reformer says;—I fain would learn
Why these, who must do *something* in return,
Whose offices of highest elevation,
Are open to all ranks and every station,
Who to the poor and friendless must dispense
For very shame with some munificence;—
I fain would learn, I say, by what strange law
These are fair prey to robbery and war,
While those Leviathans who hold the wealth,
(Which from the Church was gain'd by force or stealth,

For which no duties and no alms they owe
The State, which still in strict entail must go,)
From Church Reformers yet command respect,
As men whose rights e'en they must needs protect?
Not that we wish to rob such men, but still
If Plunder must of Church-dues have her fill,
Let her, at any rate, begin her feast
On those who have the most and do the least;
Let her from *our poor acres* hold her hand
Till she has seized on *their square miles* of land;
And, ere she dares a clergyman to touch,
Strip those who nothing do, but hold so much.

But, tir'd of this discussion, you your ground
May shift, and utter quite a different sound:
"Dissenters though we be, still we can feel
"An honest interest in your Church's weal;
"To see its hills reduc'd indeed we burn,
"But then we wish its valleys rais'd in turn;
"In short, with idle, pamper'd prelates, we
"Wage war, not with poor curates such as thee."

Get thee behind me, thou who thus canst frame
Such snares as these, for Satan is thy name!
Thus oft his wicked purpose he conceals,
And a bright angel's glorious semblance steals.

True, I a curate am, who pen this lay,
And may remain so to life's latest day;
But though a curate (and a poor one too),
With no rich stall nor benefice in view,
I hate the cunning art that would divide
The curate from his Bishop, and his Guide;
The craft that tempts, in spite of common sense,
The members at the head to take offence;
That man I scorn, who, as the Church's friend,
Forsooth, the Church would fain in sunder rend;
And pity him, who has Christ's name profess'd,
Yet envy tries to kindle in my breast!—
But, if your levelling theory were tried,
What good effects, think you, would thence betide?
Destroy without remorse each dignity,
And how much better would the livings be?
Three hundred pounds! enormous sum! a year,
The Pastor's *ne plus ultra* would appear;[1]
Active or idle, all would have the same,
And merit no reward on earth could claim;
Level the Church would seem as oaken floor,
The worst would have their share,—the best no more.
Perhaps you would not carry things so far,

[1] See Lord Althorp's Speech in the House of Commons, April 18, 1833.

You would not put all livings on a par.
Some, with ten thousand souls or more in charge,
To four hundred or five you might enlarge;
While for small villages and hamlets, two,
Or e'en one hundred pounds a year, might do.
Oh, generous theorists, who would reward
Fifteen or twenty years of study hard,
Would fill a purse in learning's service drain'd,
And nerves recruit by midnight labours strain'd,
With, of five hundred pounds the income rare,
And of ten thousand souls the easy care!
Warm'd by the hope of winning such a prize,
With such rich prospects still before his eyes,
How would each Churchman rack his aching brain,
And learning in our land revive again!

"Learning and money we Dissenters call
"Nothing,—you Churchmen think them all in all:
"Learning to us appears but earthly dross,
"And gain, compar'd with Christian knowledge, loss.
"Your zeal about your Church's income proves,
"That tithes and dues are things a Churchman loves."

So too might you, were they within your power;
Long may the grapes be, as they are now—sour!

Woe to the Christians, be they who they may,
Who to Religion give not her full sway;
Let her rule paramount in every case,
And Learning only take the handmaid's place;
Learning, which Christ himself did not disdain
To use when Saul He chose to spread His reign.
And as to money—when God in his ire
Cast our poor Church into Affliction's fire,
When first her Primate, then her Monarch bled,
And Craft, and Cant, and Folly reign'd instead;
When every mode of worship by the crowd
Was practis'd—our's alone was disallow'd;
Our Churches robb'd, their pastors forc'd to fly,
Or left in hopeless indigence to die:
Did then no faithful sons our Church obey,
E'en in her poorest plight, her saddest day?
Could she no piety, no talents boast,
When all her revenues were gone and lost?
In secret did no duteous children raise,
In her own forms, the voice of prayer and praise?
And though we wish no merit to profess,
But in God's sight unclean our Church confess,
Yet still we trust, should He be pleas'd again
To make her dire Affliction's cup to drain,
That, stript of tithes, and dues, and every thing,
Close to our Church most of her sons would cling;

And prove thereby, as once before they prov'd,
Her for her *doctrines*, not her *wealth* belov'd.

If on Church-dues too long I may have dwelt,
As if *their* danger were most keenly felt,
Remember this the area is,—our foes
Attack us here, and here we must oppose.
But hence, Reformers, with your dreams, away!
Still with the Church may all her honours stay;
Still may her ancient mitres brows surround
By fairer gems, wisdom and virtue, crown'd;
Yet in her stalls may Learning find retreat,
And still her gates receive the good and great.
Long may her voice be heard throughout our isle,
In village church and proud cathedral pile.
And never may her humbler sons like me,
Bend to the whispers of the enemy;
May Envy ne'er our better thoughts prevent,
But may we be, though humble, still content!
And as for you, Dissenting brethren, try
Your own as well as others' faults to spy;
Look not for what is perfect here below,
Or if you do, look if yourselves are so;
Take care when you to own our rights refuse,
Lest you be influenc'd by worldly views;

Beware how you with unbelievers join
Against a Church whose creed you own divine;
Nor, as you reverence a Saviour's name,
Hate, and not love, your "bond of peace" proclaim.
Be satisfied yourselves, nor rudely pry
Into a fellow-Christian's liberty,
Lest round your heads, in turn, an angry storm
You raise for "Chapel," not for "Church Reform."
You call yourselves Reformers, though you make
But slight account of the proud name you take:
Far other schemes their noble spirits fir'd,
Far other thoughts their pious souls inspir'd,
Whose grave rebukes o'erthrew the power of Rome,
Whose simple truth could her deep craft o'ercome,
Who, when by Persecution's hand assail'd,
Lit in this realm a fire that ne'er has fail'd,[1]
A flame which yet upon our altar glows,
Hope of our friends and hatred of our foes,
The flame of true religion,—may no hands
Unhallow'd touch the spot where yet it stands;
May no "strange fire" admission thither gain,
No priest unauthoris'd the place profane;

[1] See the last words of Latimer to Ridley. *Gilpin's Lives of the Reformers. Vol.* 1. *p.* 331.

Still to the end, may that celestial light
Shine steadily and clear in Satan's spite;
Still may it like a lofty beacon blaze,
And wandering Christians learn to bless its rays!

THE END.

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